

## **Casper Mountain Resource Management Plan Detailed Outline**

KLJ Engineering, Kay-Linn Enterprises, Applied Trails Research, and Single Track Trails have collaborated to bring the Natrona County Parks Department a comprehensive Resource Management Plan (RMP) for Casper Mountain. The Plan involves an inventory of the recreational assets on the Mountain, a review of the work that has been done to date by the County and key user groups, and recommendations on steps that can be taken to enhance trails, campgrounds, picnic areas and other destinations to make Casper Mountain an even better recreational asset for the community and visitors to the area.

As the initial step in the process, the consultant has prepared the following detailed outline for the RMP to clearly describe the tasks that will be undertaken to complete the plan. In that the consultants are well underway with the project, the outline covers not only the sections of the plan but provides their observations on the recreational assets reviewed to date and issues to consider as work proceeds.

### **The Plan**

#### **Background and Introduction**

The Background and Introduction to the planning effort will stress the role that Casper Mountain has played as a place to recreate for residents of the area and visitors to central Wyoming. The importance of convenient access to recreation from a health and wellness standpoint will be address, as well as the economic benefit of attracting businesses and professionals who value recreation as a lifestyle choice to the community. The economic impact of drawing athletes and enthusiast from around the country, if not the world, enjoy what Casper Mountain has to offer will also be covered.

An overview of the recreational assets on Casper Mountain and the groups who use and have helped develop those assets will be included in the Background and Introduction.

#### **Project Overview**

The first step in the planning effort is a discussion with county representatives and stakeholders on the need for the study and the scope. The extent to which the plan will focus on upgrades and expansion as opposed to maintenance will be addressed. Early in the process a listing of the users and facilities will be developed to insure that the consultants achieve a comprehensive understanding of the multi-faceted aspect of recreation on Casper Mountain.

The inventory phase of the plan will provide a detailed summary of the recreational facilities on the Mountain and how they are used. The Inventory will cover campgrounds, picnic and other day use areas, and trails. The



information to be gathered on these facilities will include:

- Campgrounds (Archery Range, Beartrap, Deer Haven, Elkhorn Springs, Skunk Hollow, Tower Hill)
  - number of sites and characteristics including access, general slope and drainage, potable water, restrooms, shelters, fire pits, trailheads, trash receptacles, signage, barriers, vegetation/screening, and fences.
- Picnic and Day Use (Beartrap, Archery Range, Crimson Dawn, Ponderosa Park, Rotary Park, Trails Center)
  - past plans, acknowledgement of past planning efforts
  - events and users
  - tables, shelters, bridges, buildings, potable water, restrooms, trailheads, trash receptacles, and signage
- Trails (Nordic skiing, biathlon, mountain bike, fat bike, running/hiking, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, sled dogs/skijoring, equestrian, and ATV)
  - extent, characteristics, general condition of trails
  - vision and existing plans
  - ownership (county, state/federal, private, organizations)
  - easements
  - single or shared use
  - parking and trailheads
  - signage
  - connectivity

The Plan will look at the level of use and characteristics of the users, how the facilities are managed including scheduling and fees, and the role Casper Mountain plays in the recreational fabric of central Wyoming. The consultant's assessment of the depth of the resource will be covered as well as the condition, strengths and limitations. The review of strengths and limitations thus far has identified challenges in the areas of:

- property ownership
- rights and easements
- mapping and signage
- coordination and management
- the level of investment required for facility upgrades
- through traffic
- well defined use areas
- connectivity
- slope, access and drainage

The recommendations portion of the plan will provide the consultants findings and listing of the alternate actions or directions that can be followed to create the type of recreational system envisioned early in the study. This section of the plan will go beyond the listing of the desired outcomes to an assessment process that will result in a prioritization of the projects identified.

Finally, the plan will conclude with a presentation of conceptual cost estimates that will cover major improvements such as additional campsites, new trails, shelters and other facilities. The cost estimates will help Park Department personnel prepare a capital

improvement plan that can be followed to implement the recommendations put forth in the study.

### **Executive Summary**

The Executive Summary section of the plan provides a brief overview of the Resource Management Plan covering how the plan was formulated and executed. The summary will present the findings of the study and consultants recommendations in a clear and concise manner to provide the casual reader with an understanding of the scope of the study, the results, and future direction.



### **General Management Recommendations**

An important focus of the plan is a review of Natrona County management practices. The management assessment will look at the broad issue of the level of control desired to ensure a positive experience for the campground, picnic area and trail users. The resources the County is prepare to dedicate to the day-to-day management of the facilities will dictate the quality and durability of the upgrades and additions. If frequent monitoring cannot be provided by maintenance staff or caretakers, the facilities may have to be more primitive in design.

Users will willing pay for quality facilities. The plan will look at the balance between reasonable fees and the corresponding level of effort assigned to caring for the facilities. The methods for collecting fees will be examined as well.

There are real and perceived conflicts between users where, for example, picnickers use campsites and snow bike riders use ski trails. The development of single use facilities can reduce the conflicts. The management section of the plan will look at how through education, mapping and signage, multi-use trails and facilities can be made to function well, reducing the cost of building and maintaining similar yet independent systems.



### **Range of Alternatives for Future Development, Improvements and Priorities Conceptual Trail Map with existing, proposed and “priority trails” and an action plan for their construction**

Extensive work is underway to map out and evaluate current trails and associated facilities. New routes that offer different levels of difficulty will be sketched out to help develop alternatives for the County staff and user groups to evaluate. While the actual design of a trail is key, the purpose of the trail in terms of destinations, connections, points of interest, and the quality of the experience must be considered.

Property ownership and licenses or agreements will have a major impact on where trails can be placed. The consultants are reviewing ownership data to identify where key segments to create a desired trail or network must be secured. While the consultants will not be negotiating easements, leases, property purchases or exchanges, they will identify locations where the County or user groups may wish to focus their outreach efforts. Building public trails on private property has been accomplished elsewhere. The consultants will present strategies that can be used to gain the trust and support of key property owners.

Well defined and maintained trails are desired by some. Other users simply want to know where they can freely ride, ski or hike. Through maps, signage and fences, parcels or tracts that are open for general public use can be defined, and the trails that provide access to such areas identified.

The conceptual maps to be prepared will be based on the GIS data currently in the Natrona County system as augmented by the consultants’ measurements in the field. The GIS platform will allow the consultants to prepare single purpose maps or composite maps that are an overlay of different types of trails. Priorities will be set and decisions made on which maps should become quality, hard copy maps for trail users and which can remain in the GIS database for users to access for special purposes like laying out race courses or hikes of a specific distance.

### **Conceptual Parking Lots, Trailheads, Campgrounds and other Facilities**

A key part of the study is to examine the campgrounds and day use facilities on the mountain to determine what upgrades or additions may be warranted. From a broad perspective, the opportunity for additional facilities will be considered as well as ways to redefine areas to create distinct day use, camping and group camping locations. The additional facilities may include:

- New shelters and an amphitheater at Beartrap
- Upgraded electrical system
- Cabins and yurts in certain areas
- A full service RV park
- More campsites at the Archery Range
- Campsites at Crimson Dawn.

On a more micro scale, individual campsites will be assessed to gauge how well they meet the standards that were established through the Alcova, Gray Reef, and Pathfinder Reservoir study. Of key concern is access, slope and drainage. Restrooms, trash containers, potable water, signage and fee stations will all be examined.

### **Project Cost Estimates per Campground and Division of Work**

The Resource Management Plan is a planning scale report that does not involve site or facility design specifics. However, it should serve as a support document that can help in the preparation of a capital budget. To serve that purpose, general cost estimates for improvements such as a new campsite, shelter, restroom or kilometer of bicycle trail will be provided. The prioritization of alternatives will facilitate the creation of annual park upgrade costs on an area by area basis.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion to the report will restate the study purpose and approach. It will go on to review the Casper Mountain trails, campground and day use system, and summarize the consultants' findings and recommendations regarding needed upgrades and suggested additions to the park system. The conclusion will address the alternatives to be considered, estimated costs, implementation strategies and areas for further study. Appendices will be added to present system information, findings, recommendations and priorities.